

MM 93-48

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SEP 7 1995

From: Deborah B. Robinson <Deborah.B.Robinson@Dartmouth.EDU>
To: A16.A16(kidstv)
Date: 9/7/95 11:58am
Subject: Educational programming

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF SECRETARY

Greetings.

I'm writing to encourage the FCC to require educational programming for children on every channel, every day. There is so much negative influence on kids from tv due to everything from violence to sugar-cereal advertising, that stations should be obligated to counteract this with positive programming for kids. I don't think that 2-3 hours per week of educational time, as was suggested in an article on NPR that I heard last week, is nearly enough, but it would be a start.

As for the contents of educational programming, I believe it should contain everything from abc's, math and science, to culture and positive morality. Television has done so much to hurt American family life and to hinder the ability of schools to teach our children. It's time we demand something back!

Sincerely,

Deborah Robinson
3 Burton Rd.
Hanover, NH 03755-2220

Deborah.B.Robinson@dartmouth.edu

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SEP 7 1995

From: Clinton M. Fisher <afn25572@freenet.ufl.edu>
To: A16.A16(kidstv)
Date: 9/7/95 4:22pm
Subject: The TV show Barney

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF SECRETARY

Hello. I have but one statement to make. The television show barney & friends, in my eyes, is completely and utterly useless and harmful to our children. Evidence in point: He teaches lying, cheating, keeping secrets from parents, and never lets the children make their own decisions.

He teaches that "cheating is ok if it makes you feel better". Evidence, Baby Bop's Birthday Special. He teaches children that "Strangers are just friends you havent met yet" nullifying everything we teach our children to keep the from molesters and kidnappers. He teaches them to keep secrets, and to lie. In every episode, he rules out descision making, as you hardly ever see them playing a game, or singing a song that they want to. The producers, Lyons Group, teach stealing, by taking the melodies of "This Old Man" and "Skip to my Lou" and various others. There wasn't even, to my knowledge, any child psychology WHATSOEVER put into the show. These are the reasons I have deemed this show bad for children, and useless, except as a filler for an early morning time slot.
Respectfully Yours,

Clinton Fisher
"Come Blinkin'. We've much to do, and less time to do it in." - Cary Elwes, Robin Hood, Men in Tights

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From: P. Bailey <edmcdo01@starbase.spd.louisville.edu>
 To: A16.A16(kidstv)
 Date: 9/7/95 10:43am
 Subject: In response to call for comments

SEP 7 1995

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF SECRETARY

Dear sir or madam:

I am writing in response to a recent Call for Comments on children's television to lodge a complaint against the children's show "Barney and Friends". This particular show teaches several messages that I find highly objectionable for young children, as outlined below:

- * The show teaches children to squelch sad or angry feelings, and only show happy feelings. (Psychologists have expressed concern about this, as it can cause children long-term psychological harm.)
- * The show teaches children to be absolutely conformist and does not encourage diversity or independence.
- * In at least one episode, Barney defines spanking as child abuse. (No jurisdiction has yet ruled that a parent using corporal punishment is illegal, though some school systems have abandoned it.)
- * The show portrays a very unrealistic view of childhood, where there is never any pain or conflict. (In relation to this, the editor of "Barney and Friends" admitted publicly during discussion on a Usenet newsgroup that the show was designed mostly as escapism for children.)
- * Directly and indirectly, the show advocates stealing and cheating. (In one episode ("The Number Limbo"), a bar is obviously raised for Baby Bop; in another, Barney decides that a stomachache is "punishment enough" for a child who stole cookies; and the show steals songs from the public domain (Among them, "This Old Man", "Skip To My Lou" and "Yankee Doodle") and inserts its own lyrics--this causes concern for the musical inheritance of children.)
- * The show is the most heavily marketed of any show on public broadcasting, and has come under fire repeatedly for this. (Recently it was demanded that "Barney and Friends" give more of the proceeds from sales of merchandise to public television.)

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I should state right off the bat that I am not waging war against children's television. I feel that there are many shows, such as "Sesame Street", "Eureeka's Castle", "Storytime", "Reading Rainbow" and "Rori and Me" that are excellent programming for the 2-5 year old set, and which I do enjoy watching with my young cousins (3 and 5 respectively). I am just highly concerned with the messages taught in "Barney and Friends".

Below, I have included an essay by Ms. Aimee Yermish, which does a fairly well thought-out comparison of "Sesame Street" and "Barney and Friends", and which I feel does a fine job of highlighting the objectionable points of the latter that cause me and others great concern.

Thank you for your time,

Paula Bailey
 5303 Adkins Rd.
 Louisville, KY 40219-5101
 Ph: (502)969-7845

<essay follows>

"Barney & Friends" vs. "Sesame Street": A Comparison
 By Aimee Yermish

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I knew something was odd when I heard two little children behind me in the supermarket singing the "I love you" song, together, in unison, in this dreamy little tempo, no life, without being prompted by an adult.

I also knew something was wrong when one of my friends, who has two Barney-aged children (3 and 5 -- Hi, Lin!) started complaining about the show. Gee, I always liked children's television, and I'd never seen those kind of reactions. That's strange. But hey, I didn't want to pass judgement on something I had never seen.

Well, I've got the flu, and there are two public TV stations near me, which means I have been able to watch two episodes of Barney a day. I watched Sesame Street also, for comparison, and also to help get the bad taste out of my mouth. Mister Rogers didn't seem to be on (which is a real pity), so comments on that are based on somewhat more distant memory (but I have watched it plenty of times since I was six).

I'm not a psychologist, but I'm also not stupid. Barney is *not* innocent, wholesome, good-for-rug-rats fun. It models "good" behavior, but only if you define "good" in a certain way. The main subtext of the show appears to be that all negative emotions should simply be denied so that we can all be happy, and that we should all conform to the group and accept the leadership of other people instead of using our own ideas. If I had children, I would forbid them to watch it, just like I would forbid them to watch pornography. The values it teaches are *not* the ones I would want my children to learn.

The children in Barney never admit to a single bit of jealousy, rivalry, anger, tension, fear, or any other bad feeling. Well, that's not true, precisely. On *extremely* rare occasions, they do say things like, "I want to go next," "No, I want to go next," "Let's go together!" All with a stupid grin on their faces that shows that there was never any real argument. The situations can *always* be solved immediately, care-bear style, so there is never any real tension.

The problem is that even stupid childless people like me know that children's real lives, even at age three (*especially* at age three!) aren't like that. Learning to share and take turns and such is not so easy, and there are usually plenty of tantrums and fights on the outside, and plenty of upset feelings on the inside. For instance, one of the Sesame Street episodes I watched recently had a situation where Cookie Monster was playing with a friend, and they went to get a snack, and there was only one cookie left. Of course, Cookie Monster wanted to eat it, but then he saw that he would hurt his friend's feelings. So he went through a song (which, by the way, is much more musically interesting and educational than the ones on Barney) where he weighed all the fun he had with his friend against the momentary pleasure of a cookie, and decided that he would rather give the cookie to his friend. On Barney, even if the situation came up (which it clearly wouldn't, because there are *always* enough treats to go around), they would have just smiled and immediately broken the cookie in half. Well, from Cookie Monster, they learn that those feelings of selfishness are perfectly normal (why do you think so many of the muppets are "monsters"? Children are very afraid of their "bad" emotions), that even if there isn't a simple solution, that by weighing the various sides of an issues, they can decide what is truly important to them. From Barney, they learn that good children don't have bad feelings and that all problems have easy solutions which don't involve giving up anything important. Mister Rogers doesn't show kids interacting with each other that much, but his make-believe and his songs send the message that you are a good person even when you have bad emotions, and that intelligence can be applied to difficult problems to find good solutions. Barney says that you are only a good person when you have good emotions, and that problems don't exist -- a very bad message to send.

Another disturbing facet to the show is the leadership role Barney takes. The children ask him what they should do to have fun, and he tells them. They ask him what they should do when they're not sure what to do, and he tells them. They paint the pictures, and instead of asking them to use their picture to add to the growing story, he takes over and tells them what their pictures mean, decides on the title and cover and doesn't even put their names on it. They can't have fun until he's there, and they can't have fun until he tells them how to do it. They don't make believe without his telling them what to imagine. Their own ideas are subjugated to those of the leader, who doesn't even ask for input. This is not a good model of creative play, nor is it a good model of teamwork or of leadership. In Sesame

Street, by contrast, the adults are viewed as resources, but the children drive the action. Every episode has a running plot where a few monsters have a problem to solve (Zoe's aunt tickles her, the fish called Wanda doesn't want Wolfgang the seal to eat her, Big Bird and

Rosita want to learn enough about babies to play family with Elmo, etc), and they come up with and try a variety of solutions to each problem, with varying degrees of success (Zoe tries wearing a tiger suit to scare her aunt, but the aunt isn't scared. She thinks about staying away from her aunt, but realizes that she would have to give up spending time with her, which she very much enjoys. She carries a pineapple around so that the spiny leaves protect her

chin, which works, but she gets tired after carrying it all day). The adults don't muscle in to the action, but offer advice or other help (at one point, Gina is practically wrestling with Wolfgang to give Wanda and Big Bird time to implement the successful idea they came up with on their own) if asked. The adults' ideas are generally good, but they don't force them on the monsters. Instead, the monsters model good information-gathering and decision-making skills.

Another thing which is disturbing about Barney is the choreography.

These kids always do everything in unison. They dance to exactly the same steps, and do not a half bad job at it. They mimic what they are shown exactly. In the episode on individuality, they did a song and dance about how boring it would be if they were all identical robots, and the sick thing was that it was basically the same as when they were kids. In Sesame Street, kids get the same body awareness practice through dance, but the instructions are much vaguer and the kids are each doing their own thing. The subtext in Barney is that it's good to do everything identically with everyone else; the subtext in Sesame Street is that you can have fun with other people while each doing things differently, that in the world of fun, there are very few "wrong" answers.

In the Barney episode about individuality, each child named something that they liked doing, on the grounds that liking something different from other people was why you were special. But then, Barney made them all do those things together. That's counterproductive -- it shows children that something gains its definition of good if everyone else likes doing it too, not if *you* like doing it. On Sesame Street, Ernie and Bert demonstrate very well how you can like other people without having to like all the same things (one of the shows I watched had an episode where they treated exactly that issue, we like different things and we love each other).

In line with the idea that the children are taught to deny their basic differences, somehow all these kids on Barney, whose ages I estimate at 8 - 16 (or maybe older, Lucy is pretty big), not to mention the grownups who show up on some episodes, pretend that they are all the same ages as the kids watching the show (2 - 5?). All people, regardless of age, react to Barney and the proposed activities in the same way -- that is, at the developmental level of a toddler. But the viewing kids aren't stupid. They know those kids are older than they are. And the real older kids (and grownups) they deal with don't react to things at toddler level. Real adults may get annoyed at noisy or messy play or constant singing of the same song. A toddler seeing the modeled behavior of older kids and adults on Barney would be very disturbed to find that his parents and siblings don't act like Barney says they're supposed to. Are my parents bad parents because they don't play the way Barney says they do? Am I a bad person because my parents get angry at me sometimes? On Sesame Street, by contrast, the characters react realistically to each other, while still maintaining the safety net that just because you do something that annoys someone doesn't mean that you or they are bad people. Tully and Rosita wander around one episode playing with a pair of cymbals, and Luis (a grownup human) makes no secret of the fact that he finds it too loud and wishes they would make all that noise somewhere else.

There were lots of other things I found disturbing on Barney, but these are the major points so far. Remember, nothing is a no-option when a kid is watching -- they learn from everything they see. And I'd rather not have any kids I've got responsibility for learn from that show. It's false in a very dangerous way.

Okay, so I do have a soft spot for Sesame Street, I was born in 1968 and grew up with it. But I really did my best to try to give Barney a chance, to view it in the most positive light I could, and I couldn't find anything worth keeping.

--Aimee

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SEP 7 1995

From: Patrick Stewart <abm1@fox.nstn.ns.ca>
 To: A16.A16(kidstv)
 Date: 9/7/95 4:54pm
 Subject: Response to FCC questions.

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
 OFFICE OF SECRETARY

Hello. I recieved a post from some friends a few hours ago regarding comments for children's television. Now, being what would probably be considered the "kid" category (14) and having several younger relatives, I think I'm correct in assuming I've been exposed to all sorts of children's television, from Babar to Barney and everything in between. Anyway, what I'd call the chief purpose of this message is a critique of "Barney and Friends", which I find fairly terrible (speaking as a witness both to the show and its effects on kids)...

- The show has ripped off several songs. The two most well-known are "This Old Man" (converted to "I Love You") and "Yankey Doodle [went to town]" ("Barney Is A Dinosaur"). The result, in my opinion, is a generation of Barney-aged kids thinking that "This Old Man" is based on "I Love You" etc. This has been referred to by a lot of people as encouraging stealing (or, at the very least, blatant copyright infringement). The show itself has been known to promote it as well; a child steals a cookie and a stomachache is referred to as 'punishment enough' (a: No, b: Stomachache from a single cookie? Er...)

-Barney and Friends has been known to promote cheating as well (a bar is raised in an episode to help Baby Bop get under while playing limbo).

-The show is heavily, HEAVILY, overmarketed. There is what could easily be referred to as a "Barney section" in the toy and department stores of most malls in Nova Scotia that I've been to. Merchandise is included in such forms as the Barney and Friends "Loot Bag" (yes, loot bag), hundreds of articles of clothes, bookbags, lunchboxes, almost every episode of the show, several full-length movies (I have seen three or so, there are rumours of more), books, costumes, toys, plush dolls (in 1 and 4-foot versions) and untold amounts of other things. It's blatantly obvious that this show has been made to make money and make money only, rivalled only by the "Mighty Morphin Power Rangers" (which are sold as action figures in dozens of forms and have recently been banned from Canadian television stations).

-The show presents an unrealistically perfect view of the world where nothing goes wrong, and everyone is happy all the time. It also promotes mindless conformity - Barney asks what they want to do and gives them one choice; the odd kid out of the group (the one who wants to do something else other then go out on the hike) is glared at by the rest of the kids until he agrees to go, etc. Only happy feelings are shown on the show (of course, with the exception of when the kid got the stomachache. Only reference I know of.)

Anyway, I have included below, an essay by Aimee Yermish regarding a comparison between "Barney and Friends" and "Sesame Street" (a vastly superior show). I'm sure you will find it very informative, as well as reinforcing any points above or adding some more.

-----+ _ESSAY BEGINS+ _-----

"Barney & Friends" vs. "Sesame Street": A Comparison
 By Aimee Yermish

I knew something was odd when I heard two little children behind me in the supermarket singing the "I love you" song, together, in unison, in this dreamy little tempo, no life, without being prompted by an adult. I also knew something was wrong when one of my friends, who has two Barney-aged children (3 and 5 -- Hi, Lin!) started complaining about the show. Gee, I always liked children's television, and I'd never seen those kind of reactions. That's strange. But hey, I didn't want to pass judgement on something I had never seen.

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[REDACTED]

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Okay, so I do have a soft spot for Sesame Street, I was born in 1968 and grew up with it. But I really did my best to try to give Barney a chance, to view it in the most positive light I could, and I couldn't find anything worth keeping.

--Aimee

-----+ _ESSAY ENDS+ _-----

Well, this message must be getting long-winded, so I will end it off here. I'm sure you have lots of other comments to get through before the Internet grows outdated.

-Patrick Stewart
-Grade VIII Student, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia

John P. Murray
1731 Humboldt Street
Manhattan, Kansas 66502

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1 September 1995

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF SECRETARY

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SECRETARY

Dear Commissioner West:

As a follow up to my letter of 3 July (attached), I am writing to urge you to vote in favor of quantitative guidelines for children's educational television.

I have enclosed a 1993 review article on children's television, in which I suggest some reasons for the need for enhancement of children's educational TV.

Please call if I can be of any assistance.

Sincerely,

John P. Murray

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GENERAL COUNSEL
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August 27, 1995

Commissioner Susan Ness
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, NW
Washington, DC 20554

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Dear Commissioner Ness:

I am writing in support of the new definition of educational programming under the Children's Television Act. I also support the quantitative guideline requirement that stations provide a specific number of hours of educational programming each week.

As a physician assistant in a sexual abuse clinic at the county hospital in San Jose, California, I am acutely aware of the effect of violence and the media on our children. It is time for us to make sure that that effect is improved.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Mary Ritter

Mary Ritter
14203 Seagate Drive
San Leandro, CA 94577

children
are watching

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF SECRETARY

August 31, 1995

Commissioner Susan Ness
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20554

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RE: MM Docket No. 93-48

Dear Commissioner Ness:

The California Broadcasters Association is **very strongly opposed** to the proposed "tightening" of the Children's Television Act.

The primary reason new proposed rules are not needed is because we are happy to report broadcasters have **already significantly increased educational and informational programming**. Additionally, such programming is going to be increased even more.

Implementing a "quota" system flies in the face of the public's control of the airwaves through their needs and desires as consumers.

Also, short segment programming should get credit because it is:

1. Important
2. Has more impact because of a child's attention span

Broadcasters understand the importance of the Children's Television Act. That's why we are responding so well. The Children's Television Act will do the job if it is allowed to do so. **No further rules are needed.** Thank you.

Sincerely,

Dino Corbin
President

Stan Statham
Executive Director

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WNEM Television
Broadcasting Group/Meredith Corporation
100 W. Franklin St. #8607
Chicago, IL 60601-4860
Chicago, Illinois 60601-4860

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF SECRETARY
Paul T. Virciglio
Vice President and
General Manager

August 30, 1995

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Commissioner Susan Ness
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, NW
Washington, DC 20554

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Dear Commissioner Ness:

RE: MM Docket No. 93-48

As you know, broadcasters have significantly increased children's educational and informational programming in response to the Children's Television Act.

Additional rules quantifying (quotas) the amount of educational and informational programming are unnecessary. Quantification sets the maximum as well as the minimum.

The children's act and the current FCC rules are working and when you address MM Docket No. 93-48, I urge your support in determining that new rules are not needed.

Best regards,

Paul T. Virciglio

CC: Mr. Edward O. Fritts
Mr. Henry L. Baumann
Mr. Charles E. Sherman

Meredith
COMMUNICATIONS

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF SECRETARY

Commissioner Susan Ness
Federal Communication Commission
1919 M St. NW
Washington DC 20554

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Dear: Commissioner Ness

I have a growing concern about the children's programming and the amount of burden that is continuously placed on the broadcaster. The broadcaster has continued to rally to the commissions demand in children's programming and we have significantly increased children's education and information programming.

The playing field has been continuously decreased in size for the broadcaster and more and more demands are placed on its shoulders. The current FCC rules are working and to increase this programming and new rules are not needed.

Broadcasters understand the current definition of "educational and informational children's programming", which needs no change. I feel that the broadcaster accepts there responsibility very seriously.

When rules quantifying (quotas) the amount are unnecessary --- broadcasters are responding to the Act and the unquantified obligation in the current rules with more and better educational and informational programming for children.

Many short segment programming is important for kids and should get credit. The above directs me to strongly oppose the FCC docket number ,(MMDOCKET No.93-48)

Sincerely

Perley E. Eppley
Perley E. Eppley GM. WFXL-TV

1211 NORTH SLAPPEY BOULEVARD
P.O. BOX 4050
ALBANY, GEORGIA 31706
912-435-3100
FAX 912-435-0485
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August 24, 1995

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF SECRETARY

Commissioner Susan Ness
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M St. NW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: MM Docket No. 93-48

Dear Commissioner Ness,

I am concerned about the Notice of Proposed Rule Making to tighten the rules on children's programming, including "quotas".

KIMT-TV is the children's station in our DMA. We have a very popular Kid's Club with thousands of members. They get newsletters which contain educational information.

I really don't believe quotas are necessary. We understand the current rules and follow them to the letter.

We seek out projects to educate children and teens via short segment stories and announcements which praise them for their efforts.

Broadcasters have responded to the Children's Act by major increases in educational and other related programming.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Shine", written over a horizontal line.

John Shine
General Manager

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Philip A. Jones

DIRECTOR
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

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August 24, 1995

Commissioner Susan Ness
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street NW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Susan:

RE: MM Docket No. 93-48

I strongly urge you to not put in place additional regulations in the children's programming area. We, Meredith Broadcasting, have three CBS Affiliates, two FOX Affiliates and one NBC Affiliate. We have always had a commitment to be responsible in our children's programming. We do that out of a sense of responsibility to our audience and their needs, not because of regulations.

The current FCC rules are working and as a matter of fact children's educational/informational programming has been on the increase. I'm sure broadcasters understand the desires of the commission and I see no reason why the rules should be changed.

I strongly oppose quotas for any form of programming. Quotas do not necessitate good programming nor does it cause the viewer to watch more of a particular format. This is particularly true as it applies to children. I've always felt the best way to deal with children's programming is through the creative process which is not as simple as stating that more is compelling to young children. I feel that a good way to reach children is through the short segment programming and broadcasters are doing a good job with vignettes that are in the educational/informational area for children.

Again, hopefully when you address MM Docket Number 93-48, you will determine that the present act is working and take no further action. Thanks for your consideration of this.

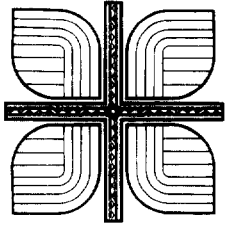
Best regards,


Philip A. Jones

cc Eddie Fritts
Jeff Baumann
Chuck Sherman

11/1/95 10:00 AM
11/1/95 10:00 AM

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CATHOLIC CHARITIES

Diocese of Des Moines

Catholic Social Service

Office of Social Justice

601 Grand Avenue • P.O. Box 723

Des Moines, Iowa 50303

515/244-3761 • FAX 515/237-5070

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August 31, 1995

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
1919 M STREET NW
WASHINGTON DC 20554

RE MM Docket 93-48

Dear Friends,

We received a request from the Federal Communications Commission Compliance and Information Bureau in Kansas City, Missouri regarding comments on proposed changes to the Children's Television programming rules. The correspondence from the Compliance and Information Bureau indicates that changes are being proposed that would set a minimum number of hours of educational and information programming.

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Des Moines, Iowa has been serving people and assisting them with their needs and problems since 1924.

In recent years, we have noticed an alarming increase in the number of child abuse cases, sexual abuse cases, domestic violence situations, and a pervasive culture of violence which seems to have engulfed the United States.

It is our feeling that the dramatic increase in violence, homicides, sexual content and other negative factors in television programming is definitely part of the violence and chaos which we are experiencing in the United States today. This is true in both programming for adults and children. As a matter of fact, it is a given that most children watch both programs designed for them and programs designed for adult viewing.

If television producers, script writers, sponsors and networks refuse to assume responsibility for the influence of the content of programming on all people -- especially children -- then it is my belief that the Federal Communications Commission should become involved in serious regulation on what goes out over the airways.

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Federal Communications Commission
August 31, 1995
Page 2

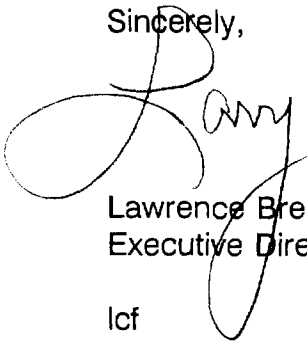
Portraying reality in television programming is appropriate. Programming which is out of contact with the real world in terms of violence, sex, and other disturbed behavior should not be sent out as the "norm" for human behavior. People are appalled at the content of current television programming.

I am in favor of regulation which will prevent the airing of programs depicting violence, promiscuous sex, perversion, and oppression. How to define such activities is difficult, but it is blatantly obvious that television programming is out of control and needs to be regulated if the industry itself will not do so.

If you have any questions, please contact me.

Thank you for taking the time to read this communication.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lawrence Breheny', written over the typed name and title.

Lawrence Breheny, ACSW
Executive Director

lcf



September 1, 1995

Commissioner Susan Ness
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, NW
Washington, DC 20554

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Dear Commissioner Ness,

I am writing on behalf of WGME-TV in reference to MM Docket No. 93-48, the Commission's proposed rule making to tighten the regulations contained in the Children's Television Act.

Ever since this Act was instituted in 1990, local, syndicated and network broadcasters have substantially increased the amount and the quality of children's educational and informational programming.

At WGME we strive to acquire and to produce programming that will be beneficial to young viewers. But we also have an obligation to serve *all* viewers with news, information, public affairs and entertainment programming.

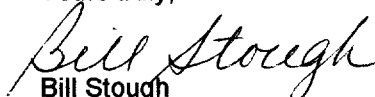
If the Commission decides that a quota system for quantifying the number of hours that a local station must devote to children's educational and informational programming is proper, WGME and stations like it will be forced into serving the public interest, convenience and necessity *only as specifically defined by the Commission!*

Chairman Hundt's recent comment that "It's time to abandon the fiction that asking broadcasters to do better on a volunteer basis has any chance of producing the desired results" is an unfortunate reading of how seriously local television stations view the Children's Television Act. We at WGME feel that the Act is working, that the majority of stations *are* striving to increase such programming and that quotas are not only unnecessary, but come perilously close to violating broadcasters' First Amendment rights.

WGME opposes new rules that would amend the Children's Television Act. We feel that the Commission should allow local stations to serve their local communities. Local viewers will let us and the Commission know if we are not fulfilling our obligations.

Thank you.

Yours truly,


Bill Stough
President/General Manager

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WGME-TV  A CBS Affiliate



James L. DeSchepper
Vice President & General Manager



3135 Floyd Blvd.
Sioux City, IA 51105 (712) 239-4100

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August 24, 1995

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF SECRETARY

Commissioner Susan Ness
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Commissioner Ness:

The Notice of Proposed Rule Making to adjust rules implementing the Children's Television Act as part of MM Docket No. 93-48 is distressing to this broadcaster for several reasons.

In response to FCC action KTIV-TV has significantly increased children's educational and informational programming. In addition to hundreds of hours of approved, syndicated programming, KTIV-TV air dozens of hours of local children's program under the *Four Siouxland's Children* campaign.

One of our on-going projects for children is to have groups plan, produce and air on KTIV-TV their own public service announcements. This projects takes hundreds of staff hours a year but we do not get credit as the announcements are not program length.

Rules quantifying the amount are unnecessary. Quality is the question, not quantity.

Sincerely,


James L. DeSchepper
Vice President & General Manager

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SEP - 7-1995

From: Cap'n Blackheart <midnite@iastate.edu>
To: A16.A16(kidstv)
Date: 9/7/95 7:23am
Subject: Children's Television

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF SECRETARY

There are many things that I see wrong with what is on TV today, and I'm going to include an article that relates to Barney the Dinosaur from PBS. The article says a great many things far better than I could myself, and sincerely hope you'll read it closely.

First though, there's something I'd like to address personally, primarily about Barney, though it can relate to other shows as well.

My concern is that of commercialism on and of public television. When you walk through toy stores and department stores and see entire sections of the store in brilliant shades of purple and green to match Barney, it is clear that there is a LOT of money being made from the show, money that has to go somewhere. Where does it go? It goes to the group who put Barney on the air, the group who created it, per se. It goes to the Lyons Group. Millions of dollars of merchandise were sold last year, and incredible profits made. Did public television get its share? No. The money was made by a separate group whose goal was to make a profit. Public Television is a non-profit organization, yet it is airing an incredibly profit making show and gaining nothing in return. The show is a half hour commercial for someone else's product, and my tax dollars are supporting it. Let Barney sales support the Barney show; it's a half hour info-mercial. Nightly Business report, while profit oriented, is supported by the groups that appreciate it the most--businesses.

My other concerns, such as individuality, reality, and the role of parents and adults are covered well by the following article.

"Barney & Friends" vs. "Sesame Street": A Comparison
By Aimee Yermish

~~~~~  
I knew something was odd when I heard two little children behind me in the supermarket singing the "I love you" song, together, in unison, in this dreamy little tempo, no life, without being prompted by an adult. I also knew something was wrong when one of my friends, who has two Barney-aged children (3 and 5 -- Hi, Lin!) started complaining about the show. Gee, I always liked children's television, and I'd never seen those kind of reactions. That's strange. But hey, I didn't want to pass judgement on something I had never seen.

Well, I've got the flu, and there are two public TV stations near me, which means I have been able to watch two episodes of Barney a day. I watched Sesame Street also, for comparison, and also to help get the bad taste out of my mouth. Mister Rogers didn't seem to be on (which is a real pity), so comments on that are based on somewhat more distant memory (but I have watched it plenty of times since I was six).

I'm not a psychologist, but I'm also not stupid. Barney is \*not\* innocent, wholesome, good-for-rug-rats fun. It models "good" behavior, but only if you define "good" in a certain way. The main subtext of the show appears to be that all negative emotions should simply be denied so that we can all be happy, and that we should all conform to the group and accept the leadership of other people instead of using our own ideas. If I had children, I would forbid them to watch it, just like I would forbid them to watch pornography. The values it teaches are \*not\* the ones I would want my children to learn.

The children in Barney never admit to a single bit of jealousy, rivalry, anger, tension, fear, or any other bad feeling. Well, that's not true, precisely. On \*extremely\* rare occasions, they do say things like, "I want to go next," "No, I want to go next," "Let's go together!" All with a stupid grin on their faces that shows that there was never any real argument. The situations can \*always\* be solved immediately, care-bear style, so there is never any real tension.

The problem is that even stupid childless people like me know that children's real lives, even at age three (\*especially\* at age three!) aren't like that. Learning to share and take turns and such is not so easy, and there are usually plenty of tantrums and fights on the outside, and plenty of upset feelings on the inside. For instance, one of the Sesame Street episodes I watched recently had a situation where Cookie Monster was playing with a friend, and they went to get a snack, and there was only one cookie left. Of course, Cookie Monster wanted to eat it, but then he saw that he would hurt his friend's feelings. So he went through a song (which, by the way, is much more musically interesting and educational than the ones on Barney) where he weighed all the fun he had with his friend

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against the momentary pleasure of a cookie, and decided that he would rather give the cookie to his friend. On Barney, even if the situation came up (which it clearly wouldn't, because there are *\*always\** enough treats to go around), they would have just smiled and immediately broken the cookie in half. Well, from Cookie Monster, they learn that those feelings of selfishness are perfectly normal (why do you think so many of the muppets are "monsters"? Children are very afraid of their "bad" emotions), that even if there isn't a simple solution, that by weighing the various sides of an issues, they can decide what is truly important to them. From Barney, they learn that good children don't have bad feelings and that all problems have easy solutions which don't involve giving up anything important. Mister Rogers doesn't show kids interacting with each other that much, but his make-believe and his songs send the message that you are a good person even when you have bad emotions, and that intelligence can be applied to difficult problems to find good solutions. Barney says that you are only a good person when you have good emotions, and that problems don't exist -- a very bad message to send.

Another disturbing facet to the show is the leadership role Barney takes. The children ask him what they should do to have fun, and he tells them. They ask him what they should do when they're not sure what to do, and he tells them. They paint the pictures, and instead of asking them to use their picture to add to the growing story, he takes over and tells them what their pictures mean, decides on the title and cover and doesn't even put their names on it. They can't have fun until he's there, and they can't have fun until he tells them how to do it. They don't make believe without his telling them what to imagine. Their own ideas are subjugated to those of the leader, who doesn't even ask for input. This is not a good model of creative play, nor is it a good model of teamwork or of leadership. In Sesame

Street, by contrast, the adults are viewed as resources, but the children drive the action. Every episode has a running plot where a few monsters have a problem to solve (Zoe's aunt tickles her, the fish called Wanda doesn't want Wolfgang the seal to eat her, Big Bird and Rosita want to learn enough about babies to play family with Elmo, etc), and they come up with and try a variety of solutions to each problem, with varying degrees of success (Zoe tries wearing a tiger suit to scare her aunt, but the aunt isn't scared. She thinks about staying away from her aunt, but realizes that she would have to give up spending time with her, which she very much enjoys. She carries a pineapple around so that the spiny leaves protect her chin, which works, but she gets tired after carrying it all day). The adults don't muscle in to the action, but offer advice or other help (at one point, Gina is practically wrestling with Wolfgang to give Wanda and Big Bird time to implement the successful idea they came up with on their own) if asked. The adults' ideas are generally good, but they don't force them on the monsters. Instead, the monsters model good information-gathering and decision-making skills.

Another thing which is disturbing about Barney is the choreography. These kids always do everything in unison. They dance to exactly the same steps, and do not a half bad job at it. They mimic what they are shown exactly. In the episode on individuality, they did a song and dance about how boring it would be if they were all identical robots, and the sick thing was that it was basically the same as when they were kids. In Sesame Street, kids get the same body awareness practice through dance, but the instructions are much vaguer and the kids are each doing their own thing. The subtext in Barney is that it's good to do everything identically with everyone else; the subtext in Sesame Street is that you can have fun with other people while each doing things differently, that in the world of fun, there are very few "wrong" answers.

In the Barney episode about individuality, each child named something that they liked doing, on the grounds that liking something different from other people was why you were special. But then, Barney made them all do those things together. That's counterproductive -- it shows children that something gains its definition of good if everyone else likes doing it too, not if *\*you\** like doing it. On Sesame Street, Ernie and Bert demonstrate very well how you can like other people without having to like all the same things (one of the shows I watched had an episode where they treated exactly that issue, we like different things and we love each other).

In line with the idea that the children are taught to deny their basic differences, somehow all these kids on Barney, whose ages I estimate at 8 - 16 (or maybe older, Lucy is pretty big), not to mention the grownups who show up on some episodes, pretend that they are all the same ages as the kids watching the show (2 - 5?). All people, regardless of age, react to Barney and the proposed activities in the same way -- that is, at the developmental level of a toddler. But the viewing kids aren't stupid. They know those kids are older than they are. And the real older kids (and grownups) they deal with don't react to things at toddler level. Real adults may get annoyed at noisy or messy play or constant singing of the same song. A toddler seeing the modeled behavior of older kids and adults on Barney would be very disturbed to find that his parents and siblings don't act like Barney says they're supposed to. Are my parents bad parents because they don't play the way Barney says they

do? Am I a bad person because my parents get angry at me sometimes? On Sesame Street, by contrast, the characters react realistically to each other, while still maintaining the safety net that just because you do something that annoys someone doesn't mean that you or they are bad people.

Tully and Rosita wander around one episode playing with a pair of cymbals, and Luis (a grownup human) makes no secret of the fact that he finds it too loud and wishes they would make all that noise somewhere else.

There were lots of other things I found disturbing on Barney, but these are the major points so far. Remember, nothing is a no-option when a kid is watching -- they learn from everything they see. And I'd rather not have any kids I've got responsibility for learn from that show. It's false in a very dangerous way.

Okay, so I do have a soft spot for Sesame Street, I was born in 1968 and grew up with it. But I really did my best to try to give Barney a chance, to view it in the most positive light I could, and I couldn't find anything worth keeping.

--Aimee

Thank you for your time and attention.

--Dave Hibbs [midnite@iastate.edu](mailto:midnite@iastate.edu)

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"The Earth is the cradle of the Mind, But you cannot stay in the cradle  
forever." -- Tsiolkovsky

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MM93-48

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From: The Dragon <s3sa@unb.ca>  
To: A16.A16(kidstv)  
Date: 9/7/95 8:39am  
Subject: The childrens television show Barney and Friends.

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
OFFICE OF SECRETARY

I have included in this text an essay by Aimee Yermish. I find the points she makes in this essay truly reflect the show. I have a little cousin who loves the show greatly, and tends to throw a fit, when he can't watch it, when he can't get a Barney toy, or when others don't act the way 'Barney says' they should act. Im not saying my aunt and uncle aren't good parents. Im saying these are the views that go into the heads of impressionable children all over the world where this is broadcast on television.

Sure, you could also argue that I too was brought up on sesame street, and indeed when I was young (3 to 5) I watched sesame street. I also learned things from it. Values that help me even today. Its not just that Barney is a ploy for commercialism, I have nothing against commerce. Infact, I like commerce, it keeps our country going. However, I certainly dissapprove of what Barney and Friends teaches for 'values'.

Conformity, cheating, and ignoration of bad feelings are not something I want my future kids to see, and learn. I want them to learn how to interact, and play. I want them to learn how to think for themselves, and enjoy what they want, and I want them to learn to play fair, not cheat.

As far as childrens television, I rarely watch it. I have had the misfortune of having to watch Barney and Friends however, when I was taking care of my little cousin. I've seen the trance its put him in. Sure the show is captivating to thier young minds, and sure its something they enjoy. However, if this show is going to put thoughts into my cousins mind, and the minds of other children around this world, I would appreciate those thoughts to be correct values, not 'ignore your bad feelings and they will go away'. Im sorry to say this, but I have no respect for parents nowadays who will sit thier child infront of a television, and not at least watch the show to see what it teaches. Or at least watch the show, and participate in thier childs learning process.

Parents are very special people to children. As said in the movie 'The Crow' (Another thing I would not let small impressionable children watch due to the violence content)

"Mother is the word for god on the lips and hearts of all children"

Please note that by using this quote, I do not stress that the mother is the most important party. I merely state that good parenting is the best thing you can do for your child, and good parenting teaches them the proper values. Barney and Friends should not teach the values it does, and it certainly should not be used as a means of 'babysitting' an impressionable young child.

Thank you for your time, I appreciate it.

----- Begin essay by Aimee Yermish -----

"Barney & Friends" vs. "Sesame Street": A Comparison  
By Aimee Yermish

I knew something was odd when I heard two little children behind me in the supermarket singing the "I love you" song, together, in unison, in this dreamy little tempo, no life, without being prompted by an adult. I also knew something was wrong when one of my friends, who has two Barney-aged children (3 and 5 -- Hi, Lin!) started complaining about the show. Gee, I always liked children's television, and I'd never seen those kind of reactions. That's strange. But hey, I didn't want to pass judgement on something I had never seen.

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In the Barney episode about individuality, each child named something that they liked doing, on the grounds that liking something different from other people was why you were special. But then, Barney made them all do those things together. That's counterproductive -- it shows children that something gains its definition of good if everyone else likes doing it too, not if *\*you\** like doing it. On Sesame

Street, Ernie and Bert demonstrate very well how you can like other people without having to like all the same things (one of the shows I watched had an episode where they treated exactly that issue, we like different things and we love each other).

In line with the idea that the children are taught to deny their basic differences, somehow all these kids on Barney, whose ages I estimate at 8 - 16 (or maybe older, Lucy is pretty big), not to mention the grownups who show up on some episodes, pretend that they are all the same ages as the kids watching the show (2 - 5?). All people, regardless of age, react to Barney and the proposed activities in the same way -- that is, at the developmental level of a toddler. But the viewing kids aren't stupid. They know those kids are older than they are. And the real older kids (and grownups) they deal with don't react to things at toddler level. Real adults may get annoyed at noisy or messy play or constant singing of the same song. A toddler seeing the modeled behavior of older kids and adults on Barney would be very disturbed to find that his parents and siblings don't act like

Barney says they're supposed to. Are my parents bad parents because they don't play the way Barney says they do? Am I a bad person because my parents get angry at me sometimes? On Sesame Street, by contrast, the characters react realistically to each other, while still maintaining the safety net that just because you do something that annoys someone doesn't mean that you or they are bad people.

Tully and Rosita wander around one episode playing with a pair of cymbals, and Luis (a grownup human) makes no secret of the fact that he finds it too loud and wishes they would make all that noise somewhere else.

There were lots of other things I found disturbing on Barney, but these are the major points so far. Remember, nothing is a no-option when a kid is watching -- they learn from everything they see. And I'd rather not have any kids I've got responsibility for learn from that show. It's false in a very dangerous way.

Okay, so I do have a soft spot for Sesame Street, I was born in 1968 and grew up with it. But I really did my best to try to give Barney a chance, to view it in the most positive light I could, and I couldn't find anything worth keeping.

----- End Essay -----

Once again, thank you for your time. This message is not meant to be a flame, nor is it written in that tone.

Signed,

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